

20/20

Youth/Adult Recreation Committee Recommendations

Members: Paula Bond, Sam Altman, Kae Crenshaw, Jo Ella Wallace, Cathy Jansen, Gayla Lewis, Blair Perkins, Bev Miller, Wanda Price, Jude Canchola, Mary Helen Smith

Objective: Recommend activities and organizations that represent Owen County's diverse recreational wants and needs, and to suggest resources to achieve them.

The Issue

- There is an unmet need for the general population who is interested in recreation outside their home and within their community.
- 20/20 survey indicates Owen Countians feel we are lacking in recreational activities.

Consequences:

- Citizen's entertainment dollars leaving Owen County.
- Young people choosing to live elsewhere rather than making their families' home here.
- Increase in crime due to nothing better to do.
- Drug, and under age drinking issue.

Current Situation

Strengths: We already offer a lot.

- We have a Parks and Recreation program and director. This is progress from <10 years ago.
- For youth Owen County offers the following organized activities (not all under parks and recreation umbrella): soccer, baseball, basketball, football, cheerleading, gymnastics, judo, 4H. For adults the following organized activities: basketball, volleyball, softball.
- Additional resources/activities available: skate park, summer camps, (golf, basketball, soccer, football), tennis, walking club, basketball court, Jr. Olympics skill competition.

- Public Library offers summer reading program for kids and teens, family fun night once a month.
- Owen Co.'s rural area allows easy access to hunting and fishing. Public lakes, shooting clubs, etc.
- Community Learning Center and Adult Learning Center: Community wide, games and activities.
- Churches (FBC and Monterey are a couple that offer activities that are open to the general public such as FLC and Upward Bound Basketball)

Weakness:

- Funding
- Insufficient Tax Base
- Transportation, sparse population, large area, everything in Owenton
- Limited facilities
- Parks and Recreation has a director but no supporting staff. Only so much one person could do.
- Activities are spread out among many different groups rather than centralized through Parks and Rec. Makes awareness and communication a problem.

Vision for addressing the issue

Raising awareness of what Owen County does offer and when, should be the first priority. This will get more folks active, and more participation = more money coming in to Parks and Recreation program.

- **Larry's corner (or Billy's):** Parks and Recreation should do at minimum a monthly column highlighting upcoming events. This would include information on the event, when and where you can sign up/participate and perhaps an expert in the area to raise interest. For example, when tennis season is upcoming perhaps info on the health benefits, a brief article from a local citizen who uses the courts talking about the game and facility that supports it, and information on upcoming tournaments and/or events. This should NOT take the place of the weekly results Larry prints in the paper from current sporting events.
- Advertise through schools

- Create a website for Parks and Rec. with information on events, how to participate, a place to sign up on line, and perhaps an e-newsletter.
- Consider doing mass mailer for large events.
- Owen County Parks and Recreation Day: Set up a fair with booths on different sponsored events including educational information on the health benefits of the activities, sign ups, tournaments (corn hole, basketball, softball, tennis, etc). Invite vendors to set up and charge a fee for booth space to help raise funding. Participation in these events builds a feeling of community and raises awareness.

Long Term:

- Year round indoor facility that includes public swimming pool: While the committee understands there is a significant upfront and ongoing cost, this is the one thing that we overwhelmingly heard again and again. Our committee not only was well represented by a diverse group, we sought out additional feedback from the youth of Owen County. This topped everyone's list of most desired activities. We need Owen County Leaders (City Council, Magistrates, Special Interest groups) to unite to seek funding and share resources for developing a plan. We also have an immediate need for a grant writer. This request is important to all committees resulting from 20/20 survey. Specific places to lobby for grant requests are NRPA and KRPC.
- Bowling Alley: Not only does this offer fun for our youth, it's conducive to family. Weekly leagues for competitive bowlers, family night, birthday parties, etc. We suggest investigating the use of the vacant building on Hwy 127 in the industrial park.

Short Term:

- Roller Skating Rink: It may be possible to use the existing Exhibit Building. It could still be used for its original purpose during fair week, and could potentially be converted for a relatively small price.
- Putt-Putt Golf Course
- Dance Classes: Just as the swimming pool topped peoples list for the one thing they really wanted in Owen County in the future, dance classes topped the list of things we can do now. These classes should be provided for both youth and adults, including seniors. There should

be a variety of dances offered. We should consider doing quarterly themes, for example, jazz for a period, ball room, tap, etc. Since facilities tend to be a problem, the exhibit building and even the pavilion in summer months could be used.

- Arts Council: Developing the arts in Owen County is an unmet need. Our County is filled with talented artists and we should reach out to them. This committee could be independent of Parks and Recreation. Our vision is, it would start on a volunteer basis to assess interest and raise awareness. Funding would come from activities, grants, and donations with the goal being to eventually have a paid position similar to the Parks and Recreation Director. The following are activities that should be considered under this council:
 1. Theatre: Drama is offered in our schools and the occasional holiday play at church, but the committee believes we need to expand the arts to Owen County. Our suggestion would be a seasonal presentation, perhaps twice a year. Encouraging interaction between all age groups from youth to seniors. This will build mutual respect among community members and offer entertainment to all age groups.
 2. Pottery classes: Ask Owen Countians to sign up for a pottery class for x weeks.
 3. Music classes: Learn an instrument both, youth and adults.
 4. Have a county wide Artist in residence program through the Community Learning Center, Adult Education and/or the Public Library.
- Friday Night Flicks: Gayla Lewis has done quite a bit of research on this idea for our committee. We suggest offering a family oriented movie during the summer months at our Fair Grounds. There is some cost involved; however, a small admission fee could be charged, and then additional funding could come from sponsoring vendors. For example, the vendor pays a set amount to Parks and Recreation to "set up" at the movies. Food, face painting, crafts, farmers market, etc. could be on hand selling their items. This would also be an opportunity for other organizations to raise money. Just as organizations sign up for dinner's at OCHS football games to raise money for their respective groups, they could sign up for concessions at Friday Night Flicks, with Parks and Recreations benefiting from a portion of the proceeds.

How do we make it happen?

- Meet with community leaders to prioritize list. What can happen now? What funds already exist?
- Lobby for full time grant writer for Owen County. There are thousands of dollars available for our County. We need a trained, devoted person to seek these dollars out. People with other full time jobs, such as our Parks Director don't have the capacity or training to seek the grant, and then write the proposal for obtaining it. A grant writer will be critical for our county to move forward with recommendations for all committees.
- Volunteers, self-funding. Find the people with passion for the topics and put them to work. This county has a devoted community who is interested in the long term sustainability and growth. It will take these people to do fundraisers, education, etc. to achieve our goals.
- Benchmark: How are other counties doing it? Our committee has done research on the Community Center idea, but we need our trained community leaders to ask the right questions to get a full understanding of the scope of these projects. Scott, Shelby, and Woodford Co. all have these types of facilities. Woodford received some state government funding for their facility because they built a theatre with it and tied it to arts. Scott County's facility took 10+ years to build, They hired a firm to come in and create a master plan. They polled the community on what should be included in the facility and what should be considered necessary to fit into their budget. They traveled to Denver, CO to look at many facilities. Denver and St. Louis have facilities in almost every community. It is a very common trend in those areas. They funded their facility with \$3 mill from general fund, the city and county work together so they went 50/50 into the project in contributing, and they bonded \$5 million from the League of Cities (do we have a league of cities, etc? These are things that need to be considered.
- Most importantly, don't wait for someone to do it for you. Come together with your families and neighbors and be a part of making Owen County the place you want it to be!